

# **ISLAM**

**And**

# **The New World Order**

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## Islam And The New World Order

For over a billion Muslims all over the world the new world order is dead even before it was born.

The twentieth century has witnessed many a leader talking of a new world order. After the First World War the American President, Woodrow Wilson, tried to breathe some fresh air into the debate on the future world order and came out with the dream of a world ruled by principles and universally accepted values. The dream shattered with the flawed birth and quick demise of the League of Nations. The world could neither be saved from a new war nor made safe for democracy. Instead, mankind was confronted with totalitarianisms of the 'right' and the 'left'.

At the end of the Second World War new hopes were nurtured once again. The United Nations was founded and prospects of a new era were aired. Very soon these hopes too shattered into pieces and the human race entered into an era of a disastrous cold war, stretched over four decades.

Recently there is a fresh upsurge in the search for a new world order. With the supposed end of the cold war the then American President George Bush came out in early 1990 with a fresh call for a new world order. Iraq's disastrous attack on Kuwait and the America-led Gulf war were used as the harbinger of the alleged new order. It was claimed that 'no aggressor would in the future be allowed to go unpunished', that 'occupation by force would not be tolerated', that 'international boundaries would not be allowed to be changed arbitrarily', that 'human rights would have to be respected by all', that 'it would be ensured that any violence of human rights is brought to an end' without the constraint of national boundaries, and that 'the United Nations would play a new role as the peace-keeper of the world'. With the establishment of these principles, it was suggested, mankind is bound to enter into a new era of democracy and security.

Who will not subscribe to such high ideals? The question.

however, is: Are those who wield political power in the world today serious about these principles or are they only interested in using these slogans to advance their own vested interests? This is the six million dollar question.

### **The Muslim World: Yesterday And Today**

Muslims constitute over one fifth of humanity today. There are about 1.2 billion Muslims all over the world. There are some 53 independent Muslim states with over 800 million Muslims living in these countries. These Muslim states occupy around 23 per cent of the land area of the world. Majority of them are found in Asia and Africa although in East and Central Europe Albania has 73 per cent Muslim majority and Bosnia-Herzegovina has also a significant Muslim dimension. There is also strong Muslim presence in other parts of the world, particularly in Europe and America where Islam today is the second largest religion, after Christianity of course.

Yet Islam remains the most misunderstood religion in the West — a religion that stands for peace and justice has been misrepresented as a religion of war and fanaticism. It is a historical fact, that over a thousand years not only the Muslims had been a dominant power in the world, the Islamic civilisation and society provided peace and security to all its citizens, including the non-Muslims. In fact it was the Muslim World that became the abode and a refuge for all those who were persecuted in different parts of the world, particularly in Europe.

Robert Briffault, while examining the record of the Muslim state and society, based as they were on Islamic religion, writes in his monumental work, *The Making of Humanity*: "Theocracy in the East has not been intellectually tyrannical or coercive. We do not find there the obscurantism, the holding down of thought, the perpetual warfare against intellectual revolt, which is such a familiar feature of the European world, with Greece and Rome at its back" (p.113). Historian Muir also clearly states that the Islamic "leniency towards the conquered and their justice and integrity presented a marked contrast to the tyranny and intoler-

ance of the Romans....The Syrian Christians enjoyed more civil and popular liberty under the Arab invaders than they had done under the rule of Heraclius and they had no wish to return to their former state" (*The Caliphate, Its Rise, Decline and Fall*, p. 128). This has been the record of the Muslims in history.

The situation has materially changed over the last three centuries. During this period Western colonial powers have ruled over the world. By and large the Muslim world was under the dominance of Western countries. During this period all nations and peoples in the Third World in general and the Muslims in particular have suffered at the hands of the colonial powers in a number of ways. Arnold Toynbee has very rightly summed up the relationship of the world with the West in the following words:

"In the encounter between the world and the West that has been going on by now for four or five hundred years, the world, not the West, is the party that, up to now, has had the significant experience. It has not been the West that has been hit by the world; it is the world that has been hit — and hit hardly by the West.... The West (the world will say) has been the arch-aggressor of modern times. And certainly the world's judgement on the West does seem to be justified over a period of about four and a half centuries ending in 1950." (*The World and the West*, p. 1-4, emphasis added)

And Professor Phillip K. Hitti observes about the very recent past:

"Unfortunately during the last decade or two, in particular, the impact of the West has not been all for the good. There is striking contrast between the humanitarian ideas professed by Western missionaries, teachers, and preachers, and the disregard of human values by European and American politicians and warriors; and disparity between word and deed; and over-emphasis on economic and nationalistic values. The behaviour of the so-called advanced nations during the last two wars waged on a scale unknown in history; the ability of Western man to let loose these diabolic forces which are the product of his science and his machine and which now threaten the world with destruction; and,

with particular relations to the Near East, the handling of the Palestine problem by America, England, France and other nations — all these have worked together to disillusion this man of the Near East who has been trying to establish an intellectual rapprochement with the West. It is these actions of the West which alienate him and shake his belief in the character of the Western man and his morality on both the private and the public levels.” (*Current Trends in Islam* by Phillip K. Hitti in *Islam in the Modern World*, The Middle East Institution, Washington p. 7-8).

The irony, however, is that this very Muslim World which has suffered at the hands of the West in the past and which remains even today weak materially, economically, technologically and militarily, is now being projected as a threat to the West. Their efforts to rediscover their identity and set their own house in order are looked upon as a challenge to the West. The Frankenstein of ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ is being seen in their harmless and innocuous efforts to activate the democratic process and seek self-reliance. From former Presidents Richard Nixon (*Seize the Moment*) and Ronald Reagan (*An American Life*) to intellectuals like Francis Fukuyama (*The End of History and the Last Man*) and columnists like Richard Pfaller and others are playing on the theme of Islam’s threat to the West. They all are drum-beating as ‘if a spectre is haunting Europe and America, the spectre of ‘Islamic fundamentalism’. This is a phony, one-sided war. Yet the politicians, journalists and mediemen, even some scholars are party to the projection of this scare-mongering scenario.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. While it is a fact that there is a worldwide Islamic resurgence, the reality is that the Muslims have no aggressive designs against anyone, at home or abroad. Muslims have suffered ideologically, economically, politically, culturally and even morally during the colonial domination. Politically with the independence of Muslim states, they have been able to achieve some mileage. Presently their effort is to see that economically, technologically, educationally, ideologically and culturally also they consolidate their lives in the light of their own faith, values and history. They do not stand for isolationism

or autarky. They want to live in the comity of nations with others, but with respect and honour not as mere 'client states' but as honourable members of this human family.

### **The Bogey Of Fundamentalism**

Fundamentalism is a distinctly Christian phenomenon. It has no place in the Islamic framework of thought and action. In recent Western history the term has been used for those evangelists in America who stood for literal interpretation of the Bible, subscribed to the theory of virgin birth, looked upon Christian ethics not merely as a basis for personal conduct but also as a basis for social and collective life. They had also criticised certain aspects of Western life and culture as deviations from Christian ethos. As most of these groups were looked upon by others as extremists and fanatics, the term 'fundamentalists' began to be used for them in a perjorative sense.

Any transplantation of this distinctly Christian phenomenon over the Muslims is not only dishonest and incorrect but also politically abhorrent. In Islam there is no difference between life-spiritual and life-material. They represent two sides of the same coin. There is no dichotomy between religion and politics as had been the case in the Christian world. The Qur'an is the Word of God and by definition every Muslim believes in the Book in its entirety. The whole of the Qur'an is fundamental; there is no attempt to pick and choose some and drop others. As such there is no scope for any fundamentalism in Islam.

If 'fundamentalism' is exclusively used to denote resort to violence and terror in religious contexts, then the whole scenario changes. Unfortunately, violence is a phenomenon which is found in all human societies and in all eras of history. There is nothing peculiar about a religious community. Human failings of men of religion are also human failings and not uniquely related to religion. Secular countries are as much prone to violence and extremism as others. Even after the ascendancy of secular culture in the modern West, blood-shed in the name of religion is not non-existent. What is happening in Ireland, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Croatia and Chechnya today is a proof of the horrors to which man can resort to despite centuries of secularism. Use of violence and discrimination is not merely on the basis of religion. Race, colour, language, life-style, ideology all have led to their own special brands of violence and fanaticism. What happened in Los Angeles and a dozen other American cities like Oklahoma only a few months back is just one example of what different shapes and forms violence can take. To project certain human failings as 'Islamic fundamentalism' can hardly be described as honest or realistic.

### **Islam, The West And Double-Standards**

Notwithstanding human failings, as has been submitted earlier, Islam's record in history on the count of tolerance is superb. Islam stands for the middle path and invites its adherents to avoid extremes. Islam is a religion of tolerance and fellow-feeling. Contemporary Muslims are as much against violence and terrorism as any other civilised human beings. Yet they are amazed at the double standards that the leaderships in the Western world have demonstrated. If illegal and arbitrary occupation was a crime in the case of Kuwait, Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the Serbian occupation of Bosnia should also be treated as equal crimes. If resort to violence by certain Muslims is censured, why many times more violence resorted to by Israeli civilians as well as forces of occupation or anti-Muslim riots in India and the Indian atrocities in Kashmir are not censured in the same manner. Use of violence by the state is as much, even more, heinous a crime than use of violence by individuals cornered by repressive regimes. Despotism is bad, but it should be bad for all people. Why support despotism in some parts of the world and criticise in others. Does that not smack of hypocrisy? Democratic process is desirable, but it should be desirable everywhere. People of Egypt, Algeria and Indonesia have equal rights to have governments of their own choice. And yet many leaders in the West have no qualms of conscience if free elections are sabotaged in many of those Muslim countries whose rulers are in collaboration with the



world powers. When Turkish Cypriots were subjected to all kinds of discrimination, denial of rights, persecution and even physical elimination, the West kept quiet. Even the guarantor power of Great Britain having a military base in Cyprus chose to remain a passive spectator. Greek Cypriots were given the freedom even to stage a final coup d'état. But when Turkey, invoking its right as the other guarantor of power intervened, all the hell was let loose. Libya has similarly been singled out for arbitrary intervention, sanctions and blackmail. Today what is happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina is another glaring example. Western powers have failed to convey an effective message that aggressors are to be punished. Instead all the signals are as if the Western world, NATO, the super power of America, with all their military might, are helpless against Serbian aggressors, who are free to perpetrate whatever atrocities they want to inflict, aggrandise as much land as they want, kill as many people they choose to massacre, 'cleanse' as many areas they want to. Those who stand for international law, peace and security are not prepared to meet force by force. They are waiting, on the debris of dead bodies and broken pacts, for the moment when the aggressor has finished its job and then they will use their influence to get an agreement between the aggressor and the victim to legitimise what has been acquired by force. When the aggrieved seek for arms and support to defend themselves, US embargo comes in the way. If by chance some sympathisers are able to cross these 'civilised' barriers, they are called fanatics and fundamentalists. To single out Muslim resurgence as fanatical and fundamentalist is not going to change the realities on the ground. It only affects the credibility of the Western leadership in the minds of the Muslim people.

Muslims do not constitute a threat to the West. There is no indication or even a remote possibility of any Muslim armed incursion into any Western country or even a threat of sabotage of their political system. Muslims are only trying to set their own house in order. They want the right to order their individual and collective lives and institutions in accordance with their own values and ideals. Movements of Islamic resurgence are not

allergic to modernity. They stand for modernisation and progress but they want to achieve modernisation and progress in the context of their own culture and values. What they disapprove of is the imposition of Western culture and values through overt and covert means over a people who have their own distinct culture and civilisation.

Economic and cultural imperialisms are as bad and destructive as political imperialism. The world would be a safer place to live in only if all nations and peoples accept to allow one another the opportunity to fashion their future order according to their own ideals and principles. There should be free exchange of ideas. Efforts to impose by force one set of values or a particular culture or system over others are to be avoided. It is only through pluralism and acceptance of cultural and ideological diversity as authentic and genuine that different nations and peoples can live in peace and amity with each other. What the Muslims disapprove of is the hegemony of one particular country, however strong it may be, militarily or economically. Smaller nations and weaker countries have as much right to exist and grow. *Pax Americana* is as revolting as *Pax Britannica* or *Pax Espania*. All talk about unipolar world and only one supreme power gives rise to newer fears and apprehensions. This is seen as the beginning of a new imperial order. A just world order cannot be produced through hegemonistic encounters.

Muslim people and the nations of the Third World would never be prepared to accept new hegemony. Small and big, poor and rich, weak and powerful have equal right to exist and to live according to their own values and standards. All should have equal opportunities to grow. Imposition of the hegemony of anyone on others is the root cause of international tension and confrontation. The West should be a little more self-critical if it is really serious about helping humanity to move towards a just world order.

### **Islam And Democracy**

It is also alleged that Islam is anti-democracy. There is a fundamental misunderstanding in this formulation. Democracy at

the philosophic level, which affirms the principle of sovereignty of man and denies existence of eternal and absolute religious and moral values, is at variance with the Islamic concept of world and society. Islam affirms the sovereignty of God and believes that man needs divine guidance. By definition the Muslim is one who accepts the divine law as the source of guidance for his individual and collective behaviour. But to infer from this that there is no democracy in Islam is sheer confusion. Islam has also propounded the principle of human vicegerency (*Khilafat*). This *Khilafat* is popular *Khilafat* and is not confined to any group of people or class. Divine law provides the framework. Within this law there is a vast area of flexibility and change. This vast area is known as (*Mubah*) the permissible and as such change and flexibility are built into the system. The Book of God is open to all who have the knowledge and capacity to understand and interpret it. The door of *Ijtehad* is open within the framework of the Islamic legal system.

The authority to rule is not given to anyone on the basis of his religious position. All members of the society have a right, nay the duty, to give the reins of power to those whom they trust in. The political leadership is accountable before the people as much as it is accountable before God. It is the people who have the right to elect or change the leadership through political process. In the Islamic political system there has to be rule of law and respect for fundamental rights of all members of the society, including non-Muslim minorities. The principle of accountability of the Government is also cardinal to the Islamic system. Similarly, the election and removal of leadership through the will of the people is an accepted principle. So is the right to disagree and dissent.

At the operational level, Muslim political system is based on these principles and as such the democratic process forms its very heart and soul. What Islam wants to achieve in the political field should not be confused with the way some of the regimes in the Muslim world are operating today, even those who invoke the name of Islam. This is very similar to the predicament of democracy in the contemporary world. Many of the claimants to

democracy in the world do not really conform to the democratic principles. This divergence should not be looked upon as failure of democracy but only as departure from it by certain people or countries.

If the Islamic political order is seen in this background, it should be understood as a divinely-inspired democratic system. That is why one of the leading Muslim thinkers Syed Abul A'ala Maududi described the political system of Islam as a theodemocracy. There is no scope for theocracy in Islam, because in a theocracy a particular religious class has the right to interpret religious law and wield political power. Islam does not subscribe to any such theocratic arrangement. Instead it establishes rule of law and equality of all before the law. It is based on the principle of accountability and formation and change of government through the will of the people. But the Muslims' worry today is that while Islam is projected as anti-democracy, popularly elected Muslim leaderships are denied the right to rule over their own countries, as Algeria, recently witnessed.

### **Islamic Resurgence And New World Order**

To understand the Muslim mind today it will be useful to reflect upon some of the major features of Islamic resurgence. Muslims are eager to see that a New Just World Order comes into existence, and not merely a new order which ensures hegemony of one country or the other.

Islamic resurgence is unique as well as universal, because in Islam there is unity with diversity, and variation that does not destroy uniqueness. Islam is a universal religion. There is nothing like 'Arab Islam', 'Pakistani Islam', 'Iranian Islam', or 'Turkish Islam' — nothing like that. Within the Islamic universalism there is unity but not uniformity.

There are certain distinct features which are common everywhere, but they never exhaust the richness of the movement. For example, Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), but not necessarily the language of all the Muslims. Although every Muslim learns at

least some Arabic, it is not less 'Islamic' to speak other languages and to use them as instruments for developing ideas which confront to Islamic norms.

Muslims are self-critical. They re-examined the superficial manifestations of social life and go back to the first principles, as expressed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This may involve disregarding some of those symbols which have become a part of the religious tradition: for example, certain customs or even certain details of jurisprudence. "Going back to the roots" is the spirit behind current resurgence.

This return to the sources acts as a liberating force. Within Islam it initiates an invigorating, dynamic process. Going back to fundamentals does not produce a 'fundamentalism' that leads to anachronisms. It brings a freshness of approach, producing a new commitment, a new dynamism, a new flexibility and a new ability to face challenges.

People are now rediscovering Islam as a source of civilisation and culture, a factor which ought to be influencing the shape of society.

In my view the contemporary phase involves moving away from a slavish imitation of Western models and becoming discriminating in what we use or adapt. In many ways we can benefit from the Western experience, but we do not intend to become instruments for the imposition of alien cultures.

Of course, not all Muslim countries have the same attitude towards Western culture. Those countries which were sometimes back pioneers of Westernisation are now in the vanguard of Islamic resurgence. While in the countries which seemed to be lagging behind and were stuck to their traditions are the people who are still enthusiastic about Western prototypes and models.

It is often suggested: can the Muslim countries really afford to reject certain choices — in development, technology and so forth — if these would enable them to build up communal prosperity and add to the possibilities of human development? This question beautifully epitomizes all the confusion on this issue. Develop-

ment and technology — yes. But the real issue is what type of development? In the pursuit of which objectives? Is it going to be mere economic development or total human development — economic, social, moral, ideological — leading to the establishment of a just social order? Do we visualise development in the context of individual states or do we have a vision of the development of the Islamic Ummah? Would this mean going back on recent history, for example, by trying to undo the existence of the Muslim nation states, or would it mean that the Muslim countries would only concentrate on carving out a new future for the Ummah?

In my view there is no going back in history; but we want to go ahead in a much more creative way than our recent predecessors. We can accept the nation state as a starting point, although it is not the Muslim ideal. It constitutes the present day reality and we do not want to dismantle political systems in an arbitrary manner. We want to bring about a greater sense of unity in the Islamic Ummah, greater cooperation and increasing integration between the different Muslim states. Under Islamic idealism, every nation state would gradually become an ideological state and these would go to make up the commonwealth of Islam.

The West has failed to see the strength and potential of the Islamic movement. It has chosen to dub it as fundamentalist, as fanatic, as anti-Western, as anachronistic, and what not. This cannot help better understanding of each other. It appears that the West is once again committing the fatal mistake of looking upon others belonging to a different paradigm, from the prism of its own distorted categories of thought and history.

Through this ill-advised approach great violence is being done to humanity. It is also bound to misinform the Western people and policy-makers about the true nature of Islamic resurgence, as they are being forced to see them in the light of a particular unhappy chapter of their own history. Islamic resurgence is a future-oriented movement and has nothing in common with the fundamentalist approach of the Christian groups. It has shown great awareness of the problems of modernity and the challenges of

technology, and its emphasis on the original sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, imparts to its approach a flexibility and a capability to innovate which is conspicuous by its absence in the approach of the conservatives who stick to a particular school of *fiqh* (law). All these possibilities are ignored by analysts who try to see the contemporary Islamic world in categories which are not relevant to it.

The present Muslim mind cannot be understood properly unless we realise that their self-understanding of their predicament is deeper than a mere political anguish. Unfortunately, efforts to understand the Islamic resurgence are often too facile and biased. The theory that the Islamic resurgence is just a result of rapid developmental efforts, particularly in the case of Iran, is overtly simplistic. Yes, the development syndrome has its own problems, but it would be an oversimplification to assume that the Muslim people's overwhelming response to forces of resurgence is simply due to tensions that have been produced by efforts to achieve quick economic development through technology transfer. Such diagnosis betrays abysmal ignorance of the ethos of the Muslim society.

Similarly, reducing the resurgence to just an angry reaction of people against Western imperialism is equally misleading. That there is a reaction against imperialism; there is no doubt about that. However, more than a political fury is being expressed or articulated. A much deeper cause is dissatisfaction with the ideals and values, the institutions and the system of government exported from the West and imposed upon them. It is a dissatisfaction with their own leaderships which they associate with Western interests, and has been instrumental in imposing Western models of development and modes of values on the Muslim society. It is a multidimensional phenomenon. On the one hand, it is a historical expression of the concerns as well as the aspirations of the people, based primarily upon internal and indigenous factors. On the other hand, it is also a response to an external challenge, the challenge of post-colonial incursions in Muslim society.

The movement of Islamic resurgence is a critique of the

Muslim status quo. It is also a critique of the dominant culture of our times — the Western culture and civilisation which is prevalent in many of the Muslim countries. And it is a critique from a different base, from a different point of reference; and that point of reference is Islam, the original sources of Islam — the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

It represents a reawakening of faith. This dimension is neglected in most of the Western writings; they assume that it is just a question of political and social rearrangements. The social order is definitely important but the starting point is reawakening and strengthening of faith, and rebuilding of the moral personality and the character of the individual. There is an upsurge of spirituality and idealism, generating a new sense of direction and commitment to reconstruct their world, whatever be the sacrifice.

The model of leadership during the period of colonial domination and of post-colonial manipulation has been one which just looked after personal interests. That is why Muslim society has become so devoid of moral values and become rife with corruption. Corruption and exploitation have become a way of life in our part of the world. Muslims have their own weaknesses and they had faced many reverses as part of the global situation. But the explosion of corruption which is so visible in the present day Muslim World is a new phenomenon. They relate it to the impact of secularisation and Westernisation resulting in loss of individual morality and of social ethics, which had historically been based upon *tawhid* (the unity of God) and loyalty to the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and which were weakened under these alien influences. Muslim modernism which had been the secularising spearhead of Westernisation in Muslim lands tried to super-impose the values of Western liberalism on Muslim society with the result that the grip of traditional values was weakened; but no new morality could be developed to fill the gap. It is in this moral vacuum that personal aggrandizement and socio-economic exploitation have become rampant, mostly in the name of economic development



and material progress. Islamic resurgence represents a rebellion against this state of affairs. It stands for reaffirmation of Islamic morality and a rededication of the resources of the Ummah — material as well as human — to the achievement of social justice and self-reliance. Muslim youth have been inspired by a new vision to rebuild their individual and social life in accordance with the ideals and principles given by Islam and to strive to establish a new social order, not only within their own countries but also to see that a new world order is established ensuring peace, dignity and justice to all the oppressed of the world.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would suggest that the Islamic resurgence is primarily an internal, indigenous, positive and ideological movement within Muslim society. It is bound to come into contact, even clash with certain forces in the international arena. The close contact of the West, particularly through colonial rule is relevant but not the most decisive factor in producing the Islamic response.

Muslims want to reconstruct their socio-economic order according to the values of Islam. This is bound to come into conflict with the international status quo. So conflict there may be. And to that extent, I would like to invite my Western friends to understand that Muslim criticism of Western civilisation is not primarily an exercise in political confrontation. The real competition would be at the level of two cultures and civilisations, one based upon Islamic values and the other on the values of materialism, nationalism and liberalism, both political and economic. Had Western culture been based on Christianity, on eternal values of morality, on faith, the language and *modus operandi* of the contact and competition would have been different. But that is not the case. The choice is between the Divine Principle and a Secular Materialist Culture. And there is no reason to believe that this competition should be seen by all well-meaning human beings merely in terms of the geo-politic boundaries of the West and the East or even in terms of Christianity versus Islam. In fact all those human beings anywhere in the world who are concerned over the spiritual

and moral crisis of our times heave a sigh of relief over Islamic resurgence, and not to be put off or scared by it.

Once the nature of the conflict as taking place on the level of values and culture is clarified, I want to underscore that there is a political dimension to the situation that we must not ignore. There is nothing pathologically anti-Western in the Islamic resurgence. It is neither pro nor anti-West regarding the political relationship between Western countries and the Muslim world, despite the loathsome legacy of colonialism which has the potential to mar these relationships. If China and the United States can have friendly relations without sharing common culture and politico-economic system, why not the West and the Muslim World? Much depends upon how the West looks upon this phenomenon of Islamic resurgence and wants to come to terms with it. If in the Muslim mind and the Muslim viewpoint, Western powers remain associated with efforts to impose the Western model on Muslim society, keeping Muslims tied to the system of Western domination at national and international levels and thus destabilise Muslim culture and society directly or indirectly, then, of course, the tension will increase. Differences are bound to multiply. And if things are not resolved peacefully through dialogue and understanding, through respect for each other's rights and genuine concern, they are destined to be resolved otherwise. But if, on the other hand, we can acknowledge and accept that this world is a pluralistic world, the Western culture can co-exist with other cultures and civilisations without expecting to dominate over them, that others need not necessarily be looked upon as enemies or foes but as potential friends then there is a genuine possibility that we can learn to live with our differences.

If we are prepared to follow this approach, then we would be able to discover many a common ground and many a common challenge. This is the key to the future world order. Are we prepared to accept co-existence, even pro-existence of all cultures, religions and nations? If the answer is yes, the future is bright. The Muslim World wants to strive for a brighter future for mankind. Much would, however, depend on how the West responds to this challenge.